Priscilla Papers

"Priscilla and Aquila taught Apollos more perfectly in the way of the Lord."

Volume 1, Number 4 Fall, 1987

New Organization Incorporated

On August 28, 1987, Men, Women and God: Chrisitans for Biblical Equality became a reality. The new organization affirms the equality of women and men in church, home, and society and encourages the full development of the gifts and talents of all Christians for God's service.

At the Christians for Biblical Equality conference held last March in Minnesota, a national steering committee was commissioned to address two major issues: incorporation as a national organization and affiliation with Men, Women and God, International, based at the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity. With these goals in mind, an enthusiastic and hard-working committee met this August in Brewster, Massachusetts, for two days of prayer, discussion, planning, document drafting and fellowship. Those present were James Beck, Betty Kroeger Elliott, Deborah Olsoe Lunde, Alvera Mickelsen, Berkeley Mickelsen, Faith Martin, Alice Mathews, Catherine Kroeger, Diane Chynoweth, Dorothy Meyer and Betty Shunk.

The committee formulated for the new organization a Mission Statement establishing its purpose, a Faith Statement indicating its beliefs and a Constitution setting forth its organizational rules. The Mission Statement says, "Our particular focus is to make known the biblical basis for freedom in Christ to those in evangelical and conservative churches." (For the full text of the Faith and Mission Statements, see below.)

To govern the organization, the committee appointed a Board of Directors and named Catherine Kroeger spokeswoman. Other board members are James Alsdurf, James Beck, Gretchen Gaebelein Hull, Deborah Olsoe Lunde, Faith Martin, Alvera Mickelsen, Berkeley Mickelsen, and Nancy Graf Peters. Also chosen were Secretary Susan McCoubrie and Treasurer Ruth Hall.

In addition to its labors on such details as incorporation as a non-profit organization, the steering committee voted to affiliate with Men, Women and God, International. The latter group was formed on August 6, 1987, at the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity. Those immediately applying for affiliation are national chapters from England, Northern Ireland, Australia, and the United States. Elaine Storkey has been nominated as the international coordinator. The organizational meeting coincided with a week-long seminar on men, women, and God at the London Institute. Speakers included Mary Anne Evans and Valerie Griffiths, both of London Bible College, David Cohen, director of Scripture Union in England and Wales, his wife Marlene, currently a diocesan director of adult education, and Catherine Kroeger, chaplain of Hamilton College.

The American representatives at the organizational meeting were Ann Paton, professor of English at Geneva College, Peter Haile, assistant headmaster of Stony Brook School, his wife Jane Hollingsworth Haile, formerly with Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship, and Catherine Kroeger. Gretchen Gaebelein Hull was also in London for the seminar, but was unable to attend the organizational meeting.

The international office will be housed in the Institute for Contemporary Christianity in London. In response to the "internationalisation of Men, Women and God," John Stott wrote in a letter dated August 18, 1987 :

"So long as MWG retains its anxiety to discern and obey God's will through Scripture, you may count on my positive support.

"If you wanted a rather fuller statement, could I offer you the following:

> 'I am very glad to express my support of *Men, Women andGod* in its aim to understand and obey God's will for sexual roles today. The authentic evangelical way is neither the conservatism which reasserts traditional positions without reflection, nor the radicalism which sacrifices all tradition to the spirit of modernity, but rather the radical conservatism which engages in a double listening, being determined above all to hear and obey God's voice as he spoke and speaks through Scripture, but to do so within the context of a respectful attention to the voices of the contemporary world.'"

The connections between the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity and Men, Women and God include the provision of office and meeting space and much positive interchange. The English group provided the following information: "The Dean of LICC was a founding member of MWG and is still in active membership. Four of the six Trustees of MWG are members of either the Faculty or Council of LICC. Andrew Kirk, an LICC Director, has contributed to the MWG book."

Our national organization is headquartered in Minnesota. Membership is open to women and men who are in harmony with the Mission and Faith Statements of the organization and who pay their appropriate dues. Local chapters may also make application to the Board for membership. (See enclosed brochure.)

For further information about the organization write Susan McCoubrie, Secretary, Men, Women and God: Christians for Biblical Equality, 2830 Lower 138th St. W., Rosemount, MN, 55068.

FAITH STATEMENT

1. We believe the Bible is the Word of God, is reliable, and is the final authority for faith and practice.
2. We believe in the unity and trinity of God, eternally existing as three equal persons.
3. We believe in the full deity and the full humanity of Jesus Christ.
4. We believe in the sinfulness of all persons, one result of which is shattered relationships with God, self, and others.
5. We believe that eternal salvation and restored relationships are possible through faith in Jesus Christ who died for us, rose from the dead, and is coming again. This salvation is offered to all people.
6. We believe in the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation, and in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.
7. We believe in the equality and essential dignity of men and women of all races, ages and classes, recognizing that all are made in the image of God and are to reflect that image in the community of believers, the home, and society.
8. We believe that women and men should diligently develop and use their God-given gifts for the good of the home, church and society.
9. We believe in the family, celibate singleness, and heterosexual marriage as the patterns God designed for us.

MISSION STATEMENT

This organization is committed to the equality of all persons in Jesus Christ and seeks to encourage full development of the gifts and talents of all Christians in the service of God. We affirm the equality of women and men in church, home, and society. Our particular focus is to make known the biblical basis for freedom in Christ to those in evangelical and conservative churches.

To achieve this mission, we seek to:

1. advance the cause of Christ by encouraging the full participation of men and women in the work of the Gospel.

2. educate Christians about the teaching of the Bible on these issues of equality in the home, church, and society.

To accomplish this mission, this organization may

1. publish a newsletter and other materials with information about the above topics.
2. sponsor conferences, workshops, and seminars.
3. maintain a resource center and speakers' bureau to provide information related to our mission.
4. provide church leaders with educational materials on these subjects.
5. commission specific research projects on these subjects.
6. encourage the ongoing development of a coherent theology of women and men.
7. facilitate the formation of local chapters to fulfill these goals.
8. encourage prayer support for Christians in discriminatory situations. **PP**

Who's On the Board?

JAMES ALSDURF is a clinical psychologist and co-author with his wife of a recently completed book on domestic violence in evangelical homes.

JAMES BECK is also a clinical psychologist as well as an ordained minister. After seminary Jim served as an associate pastor for Christian education in Oregon, then moved to California where he completed his Ph.D. He established the Valley Psychological Center in Carmichael, CA, where he was in private practice for eight years before joining the faculty at Denver Conservative Baptist Seminary. Jim says he and his wife Ginny have "a strong interest in encouraging Christian women in the development and use of their spiritual gifts."

GRETCHEN GAEBELEIN HULL is author of the newly released *Equal to Serve* , published by Revell, and of "Discrimination and Human Rights," presented at Summit III of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy in Chicago in 1986. Gretchen is a member of the Advisory Board of the Evangelical Round Table and is a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Chruch, U.S.A. She is the daughter of Frank Gaebelein.

CATHERINE KROEGER is spokeswoman for MWG: CBE and also acting Protestant chaplain and lecturer in religion at Hamilton College. Her doctoral studies focused on women in ancient religion and she has written many articles to encourage understanding of Paul's views on women. Catherine acts as co-chair of the Women in the Biblical World section of the Socity of Biblical Literature.

DEBORAH OLSOE LUNDE is Coordinator of MK (Missionary Kid) Ministries for Lutheran Brethren World Missions aand holds a Master of Divinity degree from Lutheran Brethren Seminary. She and her husband own and operate a farm in North Dakota, and they have one child and expect another this month.

FAITH MARTIN is national president of the Reformed Presbyterian Women's Association and author of *Call Her Blessed*, to be released early in 1988 by Eerdmans. She is also a member of the steering committee of Covenanter Women and edits that group's newsletter, *Cornerstones* .

ALVERA MICKELSEN is retired assistant professor of journalism at Bethel College, St.Paul, and a free-lance writer. She is editor of *Women, Authority and the Bible* .

BERKELY MICKELSEN is professor emeritus of New Testament Interpretation at Bethel Theological Seminary.Together the Mickelsen's have written numerous books and articles, including *Reading the Bible for All Its Worth* , a fine children's Bible dictionary, and two articles for *Christianity Today* on headship and male translations of the Bible.

NANCY GRAF PETERS teaches adult basic education and English as a Second Language in Poughkeepsie, NY, and is active in the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod. She has served as area president for the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, and as a member of the Education Services Board, the Atlantic District Commission on Women, and the District's Task Force to study the charismatic renewal movement. **PP**

Early Evidence of Women Officers in the Church

People sometimes write us to ask where they can find evidence that actual women held official positions of church officership. Professor Greg Horsley of Macquarie University , Australia, has kindly supplied us with the following partial list of references to women in church leadership. Although we do not usually follow this practice, in this instance we are supplying the bibliographic citations so that our readers may check the material for themselves if they so desire.

Evidence for Women as Elders (*presbutera* or *presbutis*)

1. A mummy label from second or third century century Egypt: Artemidoras, daughter of Mikkalos, fell asleep in the Lord, her mother Paniskiaines being an elder (*presbytera*). *Cahiers de Recherches de L'Institut de Papyrologie et d'Egyptologie de Lille* 5 (1974) 264 no. 1115.

2. Diogas the bishop [set this up] as a memorial for Ammio the elder (*presbytera* feminine). Found near Usak in modern Turkey (ancient Phrygia), before the time of Constantine.*Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 16 (1975) 437-38.

3. St. Cyprian writes (in *Epistle* 75.10.5) of a female presbyter (elder) in Cappadocia (also part of modern Turkey) in the mid-230s.

4. From Thera, a Greek island, an epitaph for Epiktas the elder (*presbutis*. feminine). Third or fourth century. *Bulletin de Correspondence Hellenique* 101 (1977) 210, 212.

5. An epitaph for Kale, the elder (*presbutis*) from Centuripae in Sicily. Fourth or Fifth Century. *L'Annee Epigraphique* (1975) 454.

Evidence for a Woman as Official Teacher

A papyrus from Egypt from the fourth Century speaks twice of Kyria the teacher (*didaskalos*). ZPE 18 [1975] 317-23.

Evidence for Women as Deacons or Deaconnesses

The word "deaconness" did not develop until after the period of the New Testament, and a number of women, including Phoebe (Romans 16:1) are simply called "deacon," the same title which is given to men.

1. Pliny (in *Epistle* 10.96.6) wrote of slave women who were called deacons or *ministrae* . The letter dates from about 108 A.D. and was written to the Emperor Trajan about the Christians of Cappadocia.

2. From the early Christian period in Patrai of Achaia: The deacon (*diakonos*) Agrippiane, most beloved of God, provided the mosaic in fulfillment of a vow. *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 29, (1978), 425.

3. A tombstone from Melos, inscribed at the beginning of the fourth century, mentions a mother and her children. All the children held offices in the Church, and their titles are given in descending order of importance. Asklepis (perhaps a woman), Elpizon and Asklepiodotos were *presbyteroi* (elders); Agliasis (a woman) is a deacon, (*diakonos*), and Eutylchia and Klaudiana are each specified as belonging to the order of virgins. The mother is mentioned last of all as she apparently held no church office. M. Guarducci, *Epigrafia greca*, IV, Rome: 1978, 368-70.

4. Matrona the deacon (*diakonos*). From Stobi, Macedonia, fourth or fifth century. She had been ordained by the bishop. Dr. G. H. R. Horsley, ed., *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, Sydney, 1977, 109.

5. Epitaph at Delphi, from the first part of the fifth century, for the deaconness (*diakonissa*) Athanasia. Guarducci, IV.345-47 (Delphi, V; fig. 99).

6. Gravestone on Mt. Hymettos from the late Imperial period. "I Nekagore the deaconness lie here." IG, III 2, x.3527.

7. From Kirazli in Bithynia in the later Imperial period. Eugenia the deacon (*diakonos*). *Zeitschrift fur Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 18 (1975) 46 (Kirazli, late Imperial).

8. Maria the deacon (*diakonos*). From Cappadocia in the sixth century. (*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 27 (1978) 948a).

9. Dr. Horsely offers the following translation of an inscription which was discovered in Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives. It comes from the second half of the Fourth Century:

> Here lies the slave and bride of Christ, Sophia the deacon (*diakonos*) the second Phoebe, who fell asleep in peace on the 21st of the month of March during the indiction . . . [here there is a break in the stone]. The Lord God ....

(Guarducci IV.445. fig. 132)

This inscription contains a reference to the first Phoebe, mentioned by the Apostle Paul. Helen Barrett Montgomery translates Romans 16:1-2 as follows:

"I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a minister (*diakonos*) of the church at Cenchraæ. I beg you to give her a Christian welcome, as the saints should and to assist her in any matter in which she may have need of you. For she herself has been made an overseer (*prostatis*) to many people, including myself."

Mrs. Montgomery provided the following footnote on *diakonos* . "The word used is *diakonos,* a masculine noun, meaning "minister" or "servant." See I Cor. 3:5; I Tim. 4:6; Eph. 3:7; I Thes. 3:2." Of *prostatis* she wrote: "The Greek word *prostatis* is a very strong one. It is the noun corresponding to the verb used in I Timothy 3:4, 5, 12. It is variously translated champion, leader, protector, patron." *The New Testament in Modern English,* translated by Helen Barrett Montgomery, Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1963, p. 434.

Those desiring a subscription to Greg Horsely's ongoing work may send inquiries to:
Ancient History Documentary Research Centre
Macquarie University, N.S.W. 2109, Australia.

PP

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From Our Readers

A Biblical Basis for Ministry

By Donna C. Fujimoto

It is apparent that the Chrisitan church is grappling with the issue of women's roles in ministry. Many churches rely on conclusions not founded in Scripture as the basis for their policies. This article seeks to illustrate such inconsistencies and challenge each church to carefully examine the scriptures as the basis for their attitudes and policies regarding the contribution of women to the ministry of the local church.

Let me begin by presenting the situation behind my initial awareness of this issue. The daughter of an evangelist, I had an on-going rapport with my father concerning things of the ministry. He removed me from high school so that I could join him and my mother in full-time ministry. During those four years I helped him prepare sermons and gave feedback on his performance, sang solos and led singing, produced puppet shows, taught Sunday School classes and even led an evening service. I also joined him and other ministers in discussions about Greek passages, theology and general Christian practice. Later, after two years of Bible college, I came home announcing my intention to seek ordination. My father was horrified and denounced my decision as being opposed to Scripture. All further discussions ended in disagreement and I suspended my plans in confusion as I re-examined the Bible to see if his claim was true.

In contrast to this example, let me present another. My husband attended a friend's church. He enjoyed the singing, prayer and worship, but felt that something was different about it. At the end of the meeting he realized what it was and turned to his friend to ask, "Why weren't there any women involved in the service?" She explained that her church took the scripture "let the women keep silent in the church" (I Cor. 14:34) as their rule for the role of women in worship. Women did not preach, pray, sing or in any way speak in the church services. Although I do not support this point of view, I appreciate the uniformity of their policy and sincere desire to live in a way consistent with the Bible.

Such confusion on this issue is not unusual. Neither is the turmoil that it produces in women who feel called to ministry. I believe that the re-examination of the presuppositions behind our opinions is long overdue.

The task of defining the role of women in ministry has many aspects, the most important being that of basing policy on scripture; not allowing cultural norms, personal biases or unsound interpretation to block our clear view of God's desire for the

church in this matter.

Sound hermeneutics demands that we look at scripture to determine its meaning in the most accurate manner. This does not negate the ability of the Holy Spirit to reveal biblical truth to our hearts, but it gives us a framework in which to view a text that was inspired centuries ago. The reader must study the grammar and vocabulary of the first language of a passage as well as the social setting in which it was written, and all texts addressing a specific issue need to be examined in context before one comes to any conclusion on a governing principle for conduct.

The next step is to examine current church policy to see if it is in line with what we've determined from Scripture. Are these principles uniformly applied? Are there unsupportable exceptions? Do culturally preferred roles oppose those found in the Bible? Are there any expectations that women minister at all? What avenues have been laid out so that godly women know how to serve? Is teaching required to re-educate congregations on what God has called women to do in the local church?

Although such an effort is hard work, it is innate to our faith and brings about benefits. First, it requires closer examination of the Bible. Secondly, it demands scrutiny of our personal and corporate prejudices regarding women's roles. Thirdly, it can alleviate the feelings of insecurity on the part of both men and women by clarifying expectations in stating a policy, giving us roles in which women know they will be affirmed by their local church body. It is vital that the resource of a willing sisterhood of Christians be acknowledged by their churches and freed by clearer policy definitions to serve their Lord.

Finally, it will force us to admit that there are some details over which we cannot agree. Perhaps such ambiguities will give us the opportunity to realize our finite knowledge of truth and help us rely on the Holy Spirit's wisdom with the overarching power of love to bind us together in submission to one another as we serve Him. No group of people will ever fully agree with any conclusion, yet we must stand behind a corporate, prayerfully sought decision regarding women's ministries so that our worship and community life will be orderly; a fit offering of praise to our God.

Donna C. Fujimoto holds a Master's of Professional Studies from Alliance Theological Seminary and is currently pursing a certificate to teach English as a Second Language. She and her husband Harry hope to begin a "tentmaking" ministry in Japan within two years. **PP**

Reprints for Sale

The following reprints are offered for sale at the stated price, plus a donation, for each item ordered. The views represented in these reprints do not necessarily reflect the doctrinal statement of Men, Women and God: Christians for Biblical Equality, but are included because they offer much helpful information.

1. "The 'Head' of the Epistles" by Berkely and Alvera Mickelsen. Has the misunderstanding of the meaning of 'head' robbed us of the richer, more exalted picture of Christ that Paul was trying to give us? 4 pgs. $.66 postage and handling.
2. "Does Male Dominance Tarnish our Translations?" by Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen. The Bible is uniquely inspired by the Holy Spirit, but the translators are not. 5pgs. $.72 postage and handling.
3. "Does Order of Creation, Redemption, and Climax Demand Female Supremacy?" by Alvera Mickelsen. A satire that jolts the reader into taking a fresh look at the new order Christ came to establish. 3pgs. $.63 postage and handling.
4. "Shaky Foundations : The Three-Layered Wedding Cake" by Kari Torjesen Malcolm. A candid look at the 'footings' of our marriages by the author of *Women at the Crossroads* and *Building Your Family to Last* . 4 pgs. $.66 postage and handling.
5. "The Ministry of Women" by A.J. Gordon. A classic defense of Biblical feminism written in 1888 by the founder of Gordon College. 5 pgs. $.72 postage and handling.
6. "The Apostle Paul and the Greco-Roman Cults of Women" by Catherine Clark Kroeger. A look at the world Paul lived in through the eyes of a classicist. 8 pgs. $.84 postage and handling.
7. "Why Were There No Women Apostles?" by Richard and Catherine Clark Kroeger. An answer to this question that arises so often, illustrated with some ancient proofs of female leadership. 4 pgs. $.66 postage and handling.
8. "The Early Feminists and the Clergy" by Beverly Wildung Harrison. A case study in the dynamics of secularization. 9 pgs. $.90 postage and handling.
9. "Keeping Faith in a Sexist Church" by Beverly Wildung Harrison. Written by a veteran of the struggle to know what it means simultaneously to "keep faith" and keep her integrity. 16 pgs. $1.37 postage and handling.
10. "Jesus was a Feminist" by Leonard Swidler. First appeared in 1971, translated into 13 languages and read around the world. 8 pgs. $.84 postage and handling.
11. "Jeshua was a Feminist" by Leonard Swidler. An expanded, updated version with notes. 12 pgs. $1.02 postage and handling.

12. "GOD, Father and Mother" by Leonard Swidler. Speaking of God soley in male terms is an act of injustice, or at least misunderstanding. 3 pgs. $.63 postage and handling.
13. "In Search of Huldah" by Arlene Swidler. How did we lose sight of Huldah, the first Scriptural authority, the founder of Biblical studies? 3 pgs. $.63 postage and handling.

We are always on the look-out for more articles to reprint. Do you know of any? Please send the proper infomation needed to gain permission to print to Susan McCoubrie at the MWG: CBE office. **PP**

Conference Update

"Image Maker, Image Breaker: Biblical Feminism in Practice" was the topic of a very successful conference held in London October 31 by Men, Women and God, International. Our delegate from the U.S. was Mary Kroeger, a Duke University junior studying this year at Leeds University, England. Mary participated by serving coffee to the 350 attendees and reported on the many interesting addresses and seminars. The objective of the conference was to discover a perspective on the Bible which recognizes women's equal worth in God's eyes and to explore positive ways in which women and men can be equal partners in God's service. Myrtle Langley, author of *Equal Woman* , spoke on "Word and Image: Reclaiming the Bible," suggesting that by using "Christian feminist" insights, the Bible yields messages which a male-biased reading might miss. The second main address by Myra Blyth of the BCC Youth Unit was on "Word and Image: Reclaiming Creation." She provided some practical ways in which both sexes might be fully involved in the Christian effort to care for and transform the world.

The Minnesota chapter of MWG: CBE became the organization's first official chapter on October 3! They sponsored a conference shortly thereafter, Oct. 23 - 24, entitled "Weaving a Tapestry of Peace." This was the first in a series of conferences on peacemaking that the group will hold. 75 eager participants, including 31 people new to the group, heard Kari Torjesen Malcolm's keynote address, "What is the Design, Lord?" Four seminars followed: "God's Creation Design" on Gen. 1 and 2 and Christ's relationships with women; "The Backside of the Tapestry" on healing of past hurts; "Single Strands: Finding peace in singleness at any stage of our lives"; and "Tapestry in Technicolor: Balancing the high calling of Christ with the myth of having it all." The weekend concluded with Rev. Deborah Menken's worship meditation, "The Silent Loom: To be much for God we must be much with God." **PP**

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